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"S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change

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11-19-2005, 03:54 AM #1

wolfman
 Super Member

 Join Date: Jun 2002
 Location: Texas
 Posts: 12,066
[wolfman's Photos](#)

"S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change

You will need:
 A drain pan capable of holding 2 GALLONS (8 quarts) of liquid
 Set of metric wrenches
 Oil GOOD filter wrench
 RAGS
 7 quarts of clean ATF (Mobil 1 synthetic ATF HIGHLY recommended)
 Replacement transaxle filter (Buy it from SATURN, not the autoparts store)

Proceed as follows.

Just prior to the day you are going to change the fluid, CHECK IT with the dipstick (HOT in PARK engine RUNNING) to confirm it is full. (You'll understand why later)

The fluid can be changed COLD or WARM (NOT HOT)

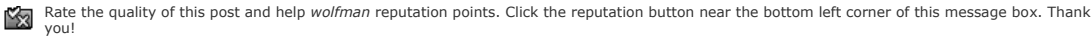
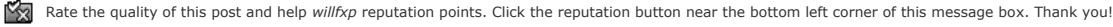
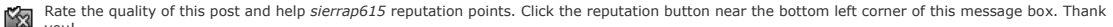
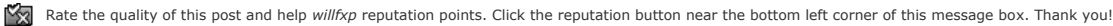
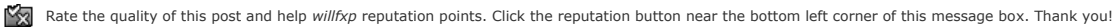
1. Remove the air cleaner "box"
2. Remove the battery and battery tray*
 *Gives better access to the FILTER, but may not be 100% necessary. **IF you have a THEFT DETERRANT RADIO make SURE you have the unlock code BEFORE removing the battery. If you do not, DO NOT DISCONNECT THE BATTERY!**
3. Under the car, driver's side, position the drain pan under the transaxle drain plug (differential case) and remove the drain plug. **When the plug comes out the fluid will RUSH out VERY QUICKLY, be ready**
4. While the fluid is draining, use your oil filter wrench to remove the transaxle filter (turn COUNTER CLOCKWISE) Very little fluid will run out of the filter when it comes off. BE CAREFULL, there are TWO SENSORS mounted in VERY close proximity to the filter. Use caution around the sensors and wires.
5. Wipe off any residue from the filter mount area. If there is a magnet mounted on the filter mounting area, remove it and wipe it off, then replace it ONLY IF USING A FILTER PURCHASED FROM A SATURN DEALER.
6. Smear a thin coat of ATF on the new filter gasket and install the new filter. Tighten it 1/2~3/4 of a turn after the gasket contacts the base. **BE CAREFUL not to get any of the sensor wires between the filter and its base, and not to damage either of the sensors!**
7. Reinstall the battery, battery tray (if removed) and airfilter box.
8. Under the car, wipe off the drain plug area and reinstall the drain plug.
9. Pour 1 full quart of NEW fluid into the dipstick tube for the transaxle. Then refill the EMPTY bottle with dirty fluid from the drain pan. Continue this NEW in refill bottle with OLD sequence until there is LESS than 1 quart of dirty fluid left in the pan. (You should have 1 empty bottle and maybe 1 or perhaps 2 full ones left at this point)
10. Pour the remaining dirty fluid into the empty bottle. There will be a scale on the side of the bottle so you can tell how much is in it. Using that scale as a guide, add the equivalent amount of CLEAN fluid to the transaxle.
11. Replace the dipstick and start the car. **LOOK FOR LEAKS! Especially around the filter!** If you spot a leak near the filter, just snug it up a little more. No leaks? Let the car RUN for **10 Minutes**
12. With the car RUNNING and in PARK, check the fluid level. **It "should" be exactly were it was when you checked it "dirty" as you have effectively put back in the same amount of clean fluid as you drained out dirty.** If it needs to be topped up, do it SLOWLY and CAREFULLY a little a time.

Wash your hands and go for a test drive. Recheck the level when you get back.

NOTE: Saturn recommends checking the transaxle level on the dipstick 3~5 times in rapid succession to ensure an accurate reading.

...
 Old Saturns never die, people KILL them, so check your damn oil!
 "Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth." Albert Einstein

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

	
	
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11-20-2005, 03:08 PM #2	
willfxp Member  Join Date: Nov 2005 Location: Seattle, WA Posts: 421 1997 SW2	 I have read that you should shift between all the gears before and after you change the oil. That way you ensure the new fluid gets between all the gears, or something. Is that true? Thanks, REWARD EXCELLENCE!  
11-22-2005, 01:32 AM #3	
sierrap615 Master Member  Join Date: Aug 2003 Location: Downers Grove, Illinois Posts: 2,538 sierrap615's Photos 	 I've heard that, i can see how it can help and how also it would be worthless. i think it depends on the design of the valve body. i can't hurt anything that wasn't already in trouble. let me also add the Wolfman's post. before changing the fluid. take a white paper towel. wipe a sample of ATF from the dipstick on the paper towel. if it is red, you are good. if it is a light dark red, its iffy. dark red, brown, or black - DO NOT CHANGE THE FLUID. if you see any grainy material - DO NOT CHANGE THE FLUID. discolored fluid and grainy particiles are signs that the friction material in the clutch packs have broken down, and friction material is now circulating in the fluid. now the fluid is acting as the friction material in the clutch packs. at this point changing the fluid will result in the loss of that friction material and result in slipping. also the material from the clutch pack can dirty up the valve body causing sticking valves(which i have done ). in short, if the fluid is in bad condition, do not change the fluid, and a trans rebuild will be needed in time. follow the manufacturer's service interval. ... Formerly - Saturn of Downers Grove Parts Department Current - Castle Chevy in Villa Park Parts Department EPA 608 Certification EPA 609 Certification REWARD EXCELLENCE!  
11-22-2005, 04:49 PM #4	
willfxp Member  Join Date: Nov 2005 Location: Seattle, WA Posts: 421 1997 SW2	 What if the color is a light red? REWARD EXCELLENCE!  
11-22-2005, 06:16 PM #5	
willfxp Member  Join Date: Nov 2005 Location: Seattle, WA Posts: 421 1997 SW2	 Ok, when I did this, I put my car up on ramps so I could get under easier. When I took off the filter, more than "very little" fluid came out. Spilled more fluid than I would have preferred. Just a note! REWARD EXCELLENCE!  
11-22-2005, 07:00 PM #6	
willfxp Member	

Join Date: Nov 2005
Location: Seattle, WA
Posts: 421

1997 SW2

Maybe I've been inhaling too much ATF... but I don't think the bottle filling adds up.

"

10. Pour the remaining dirty fluid into the empty bottle. There will be a scale on the side of the bottle so you can tell how much is in it. Using that scale as a guide, add the equivalent amount of CLEAN fluid to the transaxle.

"

But if I have an empty bottle, that means the fluid is in the transmission already. So the transmission would be "up one bottle". I'm doing this right now. All the ATF is in my oil container. I pour one new bottle into the transmission, and I pour the old stuff into that bottle. We're one to one. But you need to do that (as stated) in order to stay balanced. I don't see how you can "reverse" that procedure (by pouring the what's left in the can before adding to the transmission) and still stay balanced.

Any tips would be great, other than having an extra empty bottle. Thanks.

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

Rate the quality of this post and help willfxp reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

quote

11-23-2005, 10:12 AM

#2

Bill Murray
Master Member

Join Date: Apr 2000
Location: Speedway, Indiana
Posts: 2,015

[Bill Murray's Photos](#)

1997 SC1
1997 SC1

Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change

Quote:

Originally Posted by **sierrap615**
let me also add the Wolfman's post. before changing the fluid. take a white paper towel. wipe a sample of ATF from the dipstick on the paper towel. if it is red, you are good. if it is a light dark red, its iffy. dark red, brown, or black - DO NOT CHANGE THE FLUID. if you see any grainy material - DO NOT CHANGE THE FLUID. discolored fluid and grainly particiles are signs that the friction material in the clutch packs have broken down, and friction material is now curculating in the fuild. now the fiuld is acting as the friction material in the clutch packs. at this point changing the fluid will result in the loss of that friction materal and result in slipping. also the materal from the clutch pack can dirty up the valve body causing sticking valves(which i have done). in short, if the fluid is in bad condicton, do not change the fluid, and a trans rebuild will be needed in time. follow the manufactor's service interval.

I don't want to start a flame war but I disagree with this post.
If your clutch packs are spalling friction material, leaving the old stuff in only makes it worse because you are circulating abrasive material and plugging your filter. As you said the clutch material can "dirty up the valve body causing sticking valves" which I think confirms my opinion. Also the clutch material is abrasive to your gears, bushings, and bearings so your upcoming rebuild will be more extensive. It's always good to change fluid, and while you will find many stories about "I changed my auto trans fluid and the trans failed" it wasn't because of new fluid.

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

Rate the quality of this post and help Bill Murray reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

quote

11-23-2005, 09:40 PM

#8

wolfman
Super Member

Join Date: Jun 2002
Location: Texas
Posts: 12,066

[wolfman's Photos](#)

Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Bill Murray**
*I don't want to start a flame war but I disagree with this post.
If your clutch packs are spalling friction material, leaving the old stuff in only makes it worse because you are circulating abrasive material and plugging your filter. As you said the clutch material can "dirty up the valve body causing sticking valves" which I think confirms my opinion. Also the clutch material is abrasive to your gears, bushings, and bearings so your upcoming rebuild will be more extensive. It's always good to change fluid, and while you will find many stories about "I changed my auto trans fluid and the trans failed" it wasn't because of new fluid.*

And you would be CORRECT. If the transaxle is in such sad shape that changing the fluid will negatively affect operation, you've been living on borrowed time for a long time..

Quote:

Originally Posted by **willfxp**
Maybe I've been inhaling too much ATF... but I don't think the bottle filling adds up.

"

10. Pour the remaining dirty fluid into the empty bottle. There will be a scale on the side of the bottle so you can tell how much is in it. Using that scale as a guide, add the equivalent amount of CLEAN fluid to the transaxle.

"

But if I have an empty bottle, that means the fluid is in the transmission already. So the transmission would be "up one bottle". I'm doing this right now. All the ATF is in my oil container. I pour one new bottle into the transmission, and I pour the old stuff into that bottle. We're one to one. But you need to do that (as stated) in order to stay balanced. I don't see how you can "reverse" that procedure (by pouring the what's left in the can before adding to the transmission) and still stay balanced.
Any tips would be great, other than having an extra empty bottle. Thanks.

www.saturnfans.com/forums/showthread.php?t=65426

3/7



You can use a clear or other graduated measuring cup if the sequence nets you no final empty bottle. Anything capable of measuring the remaining dirty fluid in Onces or portions of quarts/pints so you know how much more clean to add) can of course be used. (Even an empty soda or beer bottle)

...

Old Saturns never die, people KILL them, so check your damn oil!
"Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth." Albert Einstein

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

 Rate the quality of this post and help *wolfman* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

 06-04-2006, 12:41 AM #9

[bskicrash1](#)
Member

Join Date: Dec 2005
Location: Norwich NY 1993
Sukuki GSX-R 750 2002
Kawasaki Ninja 250r
Posts: 259
[bskicrash1's Photos](#) 
2000 SC2
1996 SL2

 **Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change**

Quote:
Originally Posted by **wolfman**
You will need:...

...5. Wipe off any residue from the filter mount area. If there is a magnet mounted on the filter mounting area, remove it and wipe it off, then replace it **ONLY IF USING A FILTER PURCHASED FROM A SATURN DEALER....**
.[/color]

Why not replace the filter with one from autozone that fits the car?

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

 Rate the quality of this post and help *bskicrash1* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

 06-05-2006, 10:43 AM #10

[wolfman](#)
Super Member

Join Date: Jun 2002
Location: Texas
Posts: 12,066
[wolfman's Photos](#) 

 **Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change**

Quote:
Originally Posted by **bskicrash1**
Why not replace the filter with one from autozone that fits the car?

Aftermarket filters almost without fail have fitment, quality and more importantly FLOW issues. If you had them (an OEM filter from a dealer and a lessor expensive aftermarket one) to compare side by side, the difference is obvious.

I no longer work for Saturn, so I gain nothing by recommending OEM parts.

That being said, understand that if I recommend a particular item such as the transaxle filter be obtained from a Saturn dealer, **there IS a reason.**

...

Old Saturns never die, people KILL them, so check your damn oil!
"Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth." Albert Einstein

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

 Rate the quality of this post and help *wolfman* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

 06-06-2006, 11:36 AM #11

[oogy](#)
Junior Member

Join Date: Apr 2005
Location: Raleigh, North Carolina
Posts: 43
[oogy's Photos](#) 

 **Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change**

Suggestions on reading the dipstick?

Maybe I'm a fool but I seriously cannot tell where the level is on the dipstick.

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

 Rate the quality of this post and help *oogy* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

 06-06-2006, 11:39 AM #12

[oogy](#)
Junior Member

Join Date: Apr 2005
Location: Raleigh, North Carolina

 **Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change**

Another question..

is mobil1 really that necessary?

Posts: 43

[oogy's Photos](#)

I am cool on buying the OEM filter..

but 6\$ a quart is nuttury for tranny fluid. (if its worth it i'll do it)

Does the dealer use good stuff when they change it for you?

Because at 60\$ paying the dealer to do it would not be a whole lot more than doing it yourself (5x6\$ + 10\$ for the filter = 40\$)

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

Rate the quality of this post and help *oogy* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

06-06-2006, 11:55 AM

#13

[Uzzy](#)

Master Member

Join Date: Jan 2006
Location: Windsor, Ontario
Canada
Posts: 9,329

[Uzzy's Photos](#)

2002 SC1
2005 VUE 2.2L

Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change

Quote:

Originally Posted by **oogy**
is mobil1 really that necessary?

Opinions vary greatly. Just like on engine oil.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **oogy**
but 6\$ a quart is nuttury for tranny fluid. (if its worth it i'll do it)

My Saturn mechanic friends think so too.

Quote:

Originally Posted by **oogy**
Does the dealer use good stuff when they change it for you?

No 😊 Well it's good stuff, but not Mobil1 synthetic.

...

Aut viam inveniam aut faciam

...

If your ECTS is not brass...your ass is grass.

...

If you have a problem, if no one else can help, and if you can find him, maybe you can hire Uzzy.

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

Rate the quality of this post and help *Uzzy* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

06-06-2006, 11:56 AM

#14

[oogy](#)

Junior Member

Join Date: Apr 2005
Location: Raleigh, North
Carolina
Posts: 43

[oogy's Photos](#)

Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change

i knew 60\$ seemed too good to be true.

they at least use the OEM filter i assume

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

Rate the quality of this post and help *oogy* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

06-06-2006, 11:58 AM

#15

[Uzzy](#)

Master Member

Join Date: Jan 2006
Location: Windsor, Ontario
Canada
Posts: 9,329

[Uzzy's Photos](#)

2002 SC1
2005 VUE 2.2L

Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change

Quote:

Originally Posted by **oogy**
they at least use the OEM filter i assume

It's the only kind they have.

...

Aut viam inveniam aut faciam

...

If your ECTS is not brass...your ass is grass.

...

If you have a problem, if no one else can help, and if you can find him, maybe you can hire Uzzy.

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

	
  	
06-06-2006, 11:59 AM #16	
oogy Junior Member  Join Date: Apr 2005 Location: Raleigh, North Carolina Posts: 43 oogy's Photos 	 Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change Screw it then, I think I will do it myself. I read somewhere to use crappy fluid for a week or so to get all of the old stuff out of the torque converter then replace it for good (30k) with mobil 1 Lunacy? REWARD EXCELLENCE!   
06-06-2006, 12:04 PM #17	
Uzzy Master Member  Join Date: Jan 2006 Location: Windsor, Ontario Canada Posts: 9,329 Uzzy's Photos  2002 SC1 2005 VUE 2.2L	 Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change Quote: Originally Posted by oogy <i>Screw it then, I think I will do it myself. I read somewhere to use crappy fluid for a week or so to get all of the old stuff out of the torque converter then replace it for good (30k) with mobil 1</i> Lunacy? 4 out of 4 Saturn of Windsor mechanics agree. If the intervals are kept up with conventional it will be fine. Mobil1 would be better no doubt, but how much better? And is the colst justified in this case. Besides that you will be mixing it with the conventional stuff since you don't drain anywhere near all of the fluid when a simple transmission fluid change is done. To do it properly it should be flushed, at an additional cost. It would take at least 3 services to get most of the conventional fluid out. ... Aut viam inveniam aut faciam ... If your ECTS is not brass...your ass is grass. ... If you have a problem, if no one else can help, and if you can find him, maybe you can hire Uzzy. REWARD EXCELLENCE!   
06-06-2006, 12:14 PM #18	
oogy Junior Member  Join Date: Apr 2005 Location: Raleigh, North Carolina Posts: 43 oogy's Photos 	 Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change why on earth wouldnt the local dealer even suggest a flush? It seems to me they should be more than eager to get more money off of me. (To be fair, they have a fairly poor history of service from everyone I ask--maybe I should not trust them.) 3 whole services huh. It almost seems pointless to change it just once.. The fluid itself in my car seems very good, light red.. But it is definitely nearing 25k. My problem is the occasional hard shift from 1 to 2 (other shifts are fine). Still having a problem reading the dipstick. I know the previous owner of this car got it serviced at Jiffy Lube, which is even worse than the dealer. So I really am concerned if the level is right. REWARD EXCELLENCE!   
06-06-2006, 12:15 PM #19	
oogy Junior Member  Join Date: Apr 2005 Location: Raleigh, North Carolina Posts: 43 oogy's Photos 	 Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change I think I will take it to a local service shop and have them do a flush on it. REWARD EXCELLENCE!   

06-07-2006, 01:11 AM

#20

madpogue

Super Member

Join Date: Sep 2004
Location: Madison, WI USA
Posts: 25,715

[madpogue's Photos](#)

1996 SW2

Re: "S" Series automatic transaxle fluid/filter change

Y'know, it's funny when people think it's "lavish" to put synth oil in an oil-burning Saturn, even though it amounts to about a penny per mile. But that's at 3000 miles. Now let's do the math with the autotranny and Mobil 1 ATF.

So Mobil 1 is \$6/qt. How much is conventional, maybe \$2/qt? So, a difference of \$4/qt, times 7 qts, is \$28. Over a 30,000 use interval, that's about \$0.001 per mile. A tenth of a penny. Maybe a nickel a day, perhaps a dime if you drive a LOT. The food energy to fire the brain cells to think about this is worth more.

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

Rate the quality of this post and help madpogue reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

quote

+

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